

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

MID-PACIFIC REGION

**SOUTH-CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AREA OFFICE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA**

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**TRANQUILLITY IRRIGATION DISTRICT/SAN LUIS WATER DISTRICT
GROUNDWATER EXCHANGE PROGRAM – 2009 THROUGH 2011**

FONSI-09-99

Recommended by:

Patti Clinton
Natural Resource Specialist
South Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Ned Gruenhagen
Acting, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist
South Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Concurred by:

Laura Myers
Chief, Resource Management Division
South Central California Area Office

Date: _____

Approved by:

Tony Buelna
Acting, Deputy Areal Manager
South Central California Area Office

Date: _____

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
TRANQUILLITY IRRIGATION DISTRICT/SAN LUIS WATER DISTRICT
GROUNDWATER EXCHANGE PROGRAM – 2009 THROUGH 2011**

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval of one-year Warren Act contracts is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Number EA-09-99, *Tranquillity Irrigation District/San Luis Water District Groundwater Exchange Program – 2009 through 2011*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

The State of California is experiencing unprecedented water management challenges. Both the State and Federal water projects are forecasting very low storage conditions in all major reservoirs. Specifically for the Central Valley Project (CVP), two primary factors are governing the severe reduction in water supplies. These include: 1) low reservoir water supply conditions coming into 2009 from a dry 2008 and 2007, and 2) Delta pumping restrictions imposed by the Delta Smelt Biologic Opinion (B.O.). The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has declared an unprecedented reduction in allocated water available to South of Delta (SOD) contractors for the 2009 water year.

In response to California's third consecutive year of drought, Governor Schwarzenegger proclaimed a state of emergency on February 27, 2009. In the proclamation, the Governor found that the drought conditions and water delivery limitations identified in last year's Executive Order and Emergency Proclamation still exist, and have worsened in this third year of drought, creating emergency conditions throughout the State of California.

SLWD has over 24,000 acres of permanent crops and needs additional water to supplement their 10 percent water supply allocation. Reclamation is interested in facilitating solutions to water management challenges. Reclamation recognizes the need to use a measure of flexibility in facilitating/approving needed transfers and exchanges.

FINDINGS

Water Resources: Under the Proposed Action, Reclamation will approve an exchange of groundwater pumped from the TQID Well Field of up to 6,000 acre-feet for the balance of this irrigation season (2009-2010) and up to 8,000 acre feet next irrigation season (2010-2011). Pursuant to previous agreements regarding water quality associated with pumping groundwater for exchange in Mendota Pool, such pumped groundwater will be tested and held subject to water quality standards established for pumped groundwater entering Mendota Pool.

Additionally, TQID will monitor groundwater levels in the TQID Well Field and monitoring wells in the area on a monthly basis. The intent of this monitoring is to prevent groundwater levels from reaching what are believed to be historic low levels so as to insure that there will not be any inelastic subsidence in the area resulting from the extended use of the TQID Well Field by TQID for purposes of the exchange.

The proposed program of groundwater extraction and exchange will be stopped if resulting groundwater levels in monitor wells appear to be within 5 feet of the historic low levels. Water levels in the groundwater extraction wells involved in the Exchange (see Figure 2-2) will be monitored monthly to verify groundwater depths are within the acceptable range.

Geological Resources: Pumping for the current year will cause a water level fall which will be above the historic low in the vicinity of the wells involved in the exchange. Subsidence that occurs from pumping these wells this season will therefore be elastic and recoverable upon the return of water levels.

Land Use: The proposed exchange will generate no new housing and will result in no new permanent population growth that will exceed official regional or local population projections in the TQID or SLWD service areas. The approval to be covered under this EA will be for 2009-2011 and will be limited to use of this groundwater with no resulting land use changes.

Air Quality: Effects are similar to the No Action Alternative. Of the nine wells that will likely participate in the Proposed Action, none are powered with internal combustion engines.

Biological Resources: Although the Proposed Action will exchange water through the Mendota Pool, water levels and flow of the Mendota Pool will not change and will therefore, not have an impact on the existing biological habitats. The proposed exchange will not involve the conversion of any land and will therefore not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species or birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Since no natural stream courses alteration will occur, there will be no effects on listed fish species.

Cultural Resources: Exchanging water as described in the proposed exchange will not result in impacts to archeological or cultural resources as no land disturbance will occur. These lands are agricultural lands that have undergone cultivation and land disturbance for more than 20 years.

Indian Trust Assets: There are no ITA, Indian Reservations, or public domain allotments found within the water districts involved. Therefore, the Proposed Action will not affect ITA.

Socioeconomic Resources: The proposed exchange will have a positive socioeconomic impact to the SLWD area in that agricultural land will be maintained in production and the associated farm service industries will also be supported. The proposed exchange will allow for some additional portion of continued water deliveries to SLWD and will help to maintain the stability of the agricultural market and economical vitality for this part of the San Joaquin Valley to some degree.

Environmental Justice: The population of some small communities typically increases during late summer harvest. Without the exchanged water, some field crops may not be planted or may become stressed. The unemployment rate in the vicinity of TQID and SLWD suggests that any actions that maintain seasonal jobs will be considered beneficial.

Global Climate Change: The Proposed Action will not include any change on the composition of the atmosphere and therefore will have no direct effects on changes in climate.

Cumulative Impacts: The proposed exchange was found to have no adverse impact on biological resources, cultural resources, Indian Trust Assets, air quality (because there will be no ground disturbance or construction of new facilities) and socioeconomics and no substantial adverse impact on water resources, and geologic resources. Therefore there is no contribution to cumulative impacts to any these resource areas. Overall there will be no cumulative impacts caused by the proposed exchange.